This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-2   (Canceled)

3.   (Previously Presented) A computer implemented method for regulating data consumption in a network, comprising the steps of:

storing by a first computer an account in a computer memory for each of a plurality of users of the network, each account comprising data corresponding to an upstream and a downstream network usage balance, and a defined usage level for the network;

tracking a data consumption amount of the network by each of the plurality of users;

wherein when either the upstream or downstream balance of the account of a user of the network drops below the defined usage level for the account, imposing a more restrictive bandwidth on the continuing network usage of that user; and

for each account, crediting by the first computer at least one of the upstream and downstream network usage balance of the respective account in the computer memory on an intermittent basis.

4.   (Canceled)

5.   (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein the step of crediting is performed on a periodic basis.

6.   (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein the step of crediting includes crediting the balance of each account by an amount that depends upon the balance of the respective account.

7.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3, wherein when the balance of the account of that user rises above a predetermined level, imposing a less restrictive bandwidth on the continuing network usage of that user.

8.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 7, wherein imposing a less restrictive bandwidth comprises releasing the more restrictive bandwidth imposed on the user.

9.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3, further including a step of, for each of the users, reducing at least one of the upstream and downstream network usage balance of the account of the respective user by an amount based upon a volume of network data consumption by that user.

10.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3, further including a step of sending information to each of the users indicating at least one of the upstream and downstream network usage balance of the account of each respective user.

11.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3, wherein the upstream and downstream balance for each account is presented to the user.

12   (Canceled)

13.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3, wherein at least one of the upstream and downstream network usage balance for each account is a burst balance.

14.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3, wherein the more restrictive bandwidth imposed on the user depends upon at least one of a time of day and a current network congestion level.

15.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3 comprising regulating a bandwidth available to a user of the network, said available bandwidth based on whether a predetermined volume of data has previously been consumed by the user.

16.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 15, wherein the available bandwidth is regulated based on whether the predetermined volume of data has been consumed by the user

over a defined window of time.

17.   (Original) The method of claim 15, further including a step of sending information to the user indicating whether the bandwidth is being regulated.

18.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3 wherein the network is configured to regulate a bandwidth available to one of the users based on whether a predetermined volume of data has previously been consumed by that user.

19.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 18, wherein the accounts for each of the plurality of users are stored in a database, the database storing an overall account balance for each of the plurality of users, the overall account balance depending upon a volume of data previously consumed by a respective user.

20.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 19, wherein the first computer is configured to regulate the bandwidth available to a user responsive to the overall account balance of that user dropping below a defined level.

21.   (Previously Presented) A computer implemented method in a network for regulating data consumption in a network, comprising steps of:

    storing by a first computer an upstream balance and a downstream balance in a computer memory for each of a plurality of users of the network, each balance tracking a different aspect of network data consumption of the respective user via the network;

    imposing a more restrictive bandwidth on the continuing network usage of a user responsive to at least one of the balances of that user of the network dropping below a defined usage level for the network, wherein each user has its own defined usage level; and

    for each user of the network, crediting by the first computer at least one of the balances of the respective user in the computer memory on an intermittent basis.

22.   (Canceled)

23.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21, wherein the plurality of balances for each user are stored in the computer memory in a same account of the respective user.

24.   (Previously Presented) A computer implemented method for regulating data consumption in a network, comprising the steps of:

storing by a first computer an account in a computer memory for each of a plurality of users of the network, each account comprising data corresponding to at least a downstream balance and a first downstream bandwidth;

tracking a data consumption amount of the network by each of the plurality of users;

assigning a user a second downstream bandwidth corresponding to a downstream data flow level more restrictive than the first downstream bandwidth when the downstream balance of the account of the user drops below a defined level; and

for each account, crediting by the first computer the downstream balance of the respective account in the computer memory on an intermittent basis.

25-29. (Canceled)